



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS TO OUR MODERN LIFE. II

By SHAILER MATHEWS

AN OUTLINE BIBLE-STUDY COURSE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

This course is published in ten leaflets issued on the fifteenth of each month from September, 1914, to June, 1915. It is sent free to all members of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE enrolling for this course. Membership in the INSTITUTE may be secured by sending the annual membership fee of fifty cents, and four cents for postage, to the headquarters of the INSTITUTE, at the University of Chicago.

PART I. THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUS

STUDY II

THE OBLIGATIONS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Jesus' use of the parental analogy is not loosely philosophical. To understand his thought one needs to think with him rather than with the philosophers before or after his day. In the effort to discover the message of Jesus, we should not limit ourselves simply to his teaching as found in the first three (the Synoptic) Gospels. While it is true that these Gospels doubtless bring us more closely to the precise words of Jesus, they do not bring us any nearer the principles of his teaching than the Gospel according to John. Whatever may be one's belief as to the origin and authorship of that wonderful piece of writing, the latest of the Gospels, it is truly representative of the Christian religion of New Testament times. To study it is to be led into an appreciation of the principles of Jesus as tested by two generations of believers, and expounded by one in sympathy with the Greek culture to which the modern is so much indebted.

Particularly is this true in the case of the teaching of Jesus relative to the sonship of God. All four of the Gospels make it plain that Jesus conceived of sonship of God as a moral likeness with the Heavenly Father. This is the very basis of the ethics of Jesus. To understand Jesus' teaching we must approach him *religiously*, as well as scientifically, remembering that in his use of the parental analogy he is not thinking of the origin of humanity, but of the outcome of human character.

I. WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

In answering this question we should remember that the terms expressing divine sonship do not originate with Jesus but are one of the great inheritances which he received from his people. To get the full meaning of this conception, we must first look at the teaching of the Old Testament.

First and second days.—§ 22. *Sonship of God an analogy based on genuine family relations:* Gen. 4:1-15; chaps. 27-35; chaps. 37, 39-50. One of the basic principles in the development of the religion of Israel was the ideal of the family and the obligations implied in right relationship in the family. Fidelity and mutual responsibility between brothers of a common human father were esteemed essential to right living. The unfortunate consequences of violation of this brotherly obligation are graphically described in the earliest national stories. Read the story of Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:1-15. Recall the difficulties of Jacob following his betrayal of his brother Esau, Gen., chaps. 27-35. Read also from the story of Joseph and his brothers, Gen., chaps. 37, 39-50.

Third day.—§ 23. *The brotherly relation of all descendants of Abraham:* Amos 5:11-15; Mic. 2:1, 2; Isa. 1:13-15; 3:14-26; Jer. 5:25-29. As the family developed into the nation, so the obligations between brothers of the same father were broadened into the brotherly relation of all descendants of Abraham, the father of the nation. This obligation within the nation is urged by prophet and lawgiver. Read the denunciations of the prophet against selfishness, greed, injustice, and oppression, all violations of the principles of brotherhood in the social state, Amos 5:11-15; Mic. 2:1, 2; Isa. 1:13-15; 3:14-26; Jer. 5:25-29.

Fourth day.—§ 24. *The members of God's kingdom are the children of God:* Hos. 1:10; 11:1-4; Mal. 3:16, 17; Prov. 3:12. The idea of brotherhood through sonship first in the family or tribe naturally laid the basis for the broader conception of a sonship involving any membership in the Jewish nation, of which God was Father and King (Hos. 1:10; 11:1-4; Mal. 3:16, 17; Prov. 3:12). This conception of the "children of God" was extended to the members in the messianic kingdom of God, that kingdom of the future toward which the Jews were ever looking. Thus in one of the so-called Psalms of Solomon, written by a Pharisee in the last century before Christ, the expected Christ is said to recognize his subjects as the "sons of their God."

Fifth day.—Matt. 3:7-9; Gal. 3:7-29. John the Baptist went still farther than the most liberal Pharisees. Read Matt. 3:7-9 and note how John refused to limit sonship of God, or membership in the kingdom, to sons of Abraham. Read also the words of Paul in Gal. 3:7-29, which seem almost like the elaboration of John's statement.

Sixth day.—Matt. 13. The same thought is to be seen in Jesus' use of the term. The children of God are those who are to be members of the kingdom of God, the coming of which he announced. Read Matt., chap. 13, noting especially the parable of the Tares.

Seventh day.—John 3:1-22. Those who entered the kingdom had to be members born from above, that is, from God. Read the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus in John 3:1-22.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The children of God are to be like their Heavenly Father. This is the great ideal which Jesus sets before his followers. To be a child of God is to be something more than to be created by God. Jesus is interested, not in origins, but in destinies. For this reason, as well as for many others, he emphasizes the moral obligations of men rather than their inherited moral powers. These last he seems to take for granted. He teaches that men who have determined to enter the kingdom of God, i.e., to become the children of God, pass through a definite religious experience.

Eighth day.—§ 25. *Fundamental moral likeness with God is the distinguishing characteristic of the children of God:* Matt. 5:43-48; John 1:9-13; Luke 6:35, 36. Consider carefully Matt. 5:43-48 and compare with it the statement in John 1:9-13. To them their Father would give the kingdom. Luke 12:22-32.

Ninth day.—§ 26. *Repentance:* Matt. 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-18; Mark 1:15; John 1:1-14. To become a child of God, one must repent, abandon the course of sin. The call to repentance was one of the distinguishing characteristics of the preaching of John the Baptist. Read Matt. 3:1-12 (Luke 3:1-18) and notice how vividly he pictures a Judgment Day. According to the current beliefs of his times, the kingdom of God was not to come until after the Judgment Day, at which time all human beings were to be judged. It was the chief purpose of the teaching of the law to prepare men for acquittal at that day. Contrast the call with which Jesus began his ministry (Mark 1:15) with this cry of John the Baptist. Consider also the interpretation given Jesus by the Baptist in John 1:1-14.

Tenth day.—Matt. 11:20-24; 21:23-32; Luke 13:1-9. Jesus also calls men to repent. Read Matt. 11:20-24 and Matt. 21:23-32. But does not Jesus teach that God is not vindictive but endeavors to give men more opportunities for repentance? Read Luke 13:1-9.

Eleventh day.—§ 27. *Faith in God:* Matt. 6:5-13, 24-34; Matt. 7:7-11; Mark 11:22-24. Jesus taught constantly that men should express faith in God, not merely as a sovereign who is to judge the world, but as a father who loves to give good gifts to his children. Matt. 5:8. This faith might extend to very concrete needs. Matt. 6:5-13, 24-34; Matt. 7:7-11; Mark 11:22-24. The moral interpretation of the Judgment Day is found in John 3:13-31.

Twelfth day.—John 14:1-31. This central teaching of Jesus is very beautifully elaborated in the Gospel according to John. The joy of this faith in God as Father and the capacity to overcome even great sorrow are to be seen in John 14:1-31.

Thirteenth day.—§ 28. *The dynamic of faith in Jesus:* Matt. 13:54-59; Mark 6:1-6; Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 5:25-34, 35-43. Throughout the Gospels the activity of Jesus is conditioned in large part upon the degree of faith of those to whom he speaks. Where there is little faith, as in Nazareth, he can accomplish little. Matt. 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6. Faith in Jesus was a condition also of his cures. Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 5:25-34, 35-42.

Fourteenth day.—Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16; Luke 17:5-10. But Jesus did not approve of faith that was interested only in his power to work miracles. He

desired a faith that should recognize his true relationship to the kingdom, even though that faith were very weak. Read Mark 9:33-37, also 10:13-16 and Luke 17:5-10. He wanted men not only to believe in the coming of the kingdom but to be ready to stake their lives upon the worth of the kingdom he himself was announcing.

Fifteenth day.—§ 29. *Sacrificial life a characteristic of the children of God:* Matt. 23:8-12; Matt. 25:31-46; John, chap. 17. How Jesus emphasized this can be seen from many of his sayings, but as clearly as any from Matt. 23:8-12; Matt. 25:31-46, and the wonderful exposition of the spirit of Jesus to be seen in John, chap. 17.

Sixteenth day.—Matt. 23:1-33. The contrary quality of life Jesus finds displayed in some of those who seek a reputation for piety. Read Matt. 23:1-33.

Seventeenth day.—Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 20:20-27. Jesus teaches that kindly deeds are the natural expression of brotherly love, the fruit that tells of the good tree. Read Luke 10:25-37 and Matt. 20:20-27.

Eighteenth day.—Matt. 6:1-4; Mark 10:28-45; Matt. 8:19-22; Luke 14:27. The teaching of Jesus is addressed especially to those who have that which may help other people. He did not seek to create discontent, which incites people to get something, but rather to give something. Read Matt. 6:1-4. It was in the spirit of this sacrifice that Jesus went to Jerusalem and to his death (Mark 10:28-45), and it was to the same complete subordination of personal comfort to service that he summoned his disciples. Read Matt. 8:19-22 and Luke 14:27.

III. PRIVILEGES OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The gospel is more than a call to duty. It is a message of the living God who gives us power to perform our duties whenever we are ready to make the sacrifice which such loyalty to him may involve. The gospel is not identical with the Sermon on the Mount. Beyond the searching call to follow the ideals of Jesus there contained, the teaching of Jesus also presents words of encouragement and of hope. Recall the Beatitudes, Matt., chap. 5. Among other privileges of the children of God are these: forgiveness, joy, anticipation and enjoyment of eternal life.

Nineteenth day.—§ 30. *The enjoyment of divine forgiveness:* Luke, chap. 15. Read carefully the fifteenth chapter of Luke, noting to whom the stories are addressed. Could words express more clearly the eagerness of God to forgive those who are really repentant?

Twentieth day.—Luke 7:36-50; Matt. 18:21-35. The evidence that one is forgiven, Jesus teaches, lies in the upspringing of a new love, and this love finds expression in service to others. Read the double story in Luke 7:36-50 and the answer of Jesus to Peter's question in Matt. 18:21-35.

Twenty-first day.—§ 31. *The right to be joyful:* Luke, chap. 15; Matt. 11:25-30; John, chap. 16; Matt. 6:6-8. Sometimes men have thought that goodness cannot have in it much gladness. Some of our popular proverbs unfortunately emphasize this fact. Jesus insists that there is joy in his service even though certain things have to be sacrificed. Recall the parables of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. The thought of the joy and peace which comes through faith in God, as Jesus reveals him,

appears in Jesus' own life. Read Matt. 11:25-30. This thought is constantly present in the Gospel of John. Note particularly John, chap. 16, where the joy of spiritual fellowship with God is sharply contrasted with ordinary pleasure and comfort. In this connection, also, one should consider Jesus' teaching that fasting was not necessary to induce God to forgive (Mark 2:18-22). His words upon prayer (Matt. 6:6-8) have significance here.

Twenty-second day.—§ 32. *Eternal life the portion of the children of God:* Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 7:21-29; John, chap. 5; John 6:40-69. Eternal life in the teaching of Jesus, while it includes the idea of endless existence, has a much richer content than that of mere everlastingness. Eternal life is the sort of life which is to be lived in the kingdom of God and the new age which is to come when Jesus is supreme. Such a life will triumph over death. It is the highest good of which Jesus speaks. Read Luke 10:25-37 and Matt. 7:21-29. In the Synoptic Gospels the term "kingdom of God" is more frequently used than "eternal life," but they are two phases of the same conception. The Fourth Gospel has more to say about eternal life, but in connections which make it evident that reference is to "eternal life" as membership in the kingdom of God. John, chap. 5, discusses this matter in detail, as does John 6:40-69.

Twenty-third day.—John 16:1-33; John 17:3. This Godlike life full of service and joy, certain to be perfected beyond the grave, the Fourth Gospel represents as already present because God already is in men's lives. John 16:1-33; John 17:3.

Twenty-fourth day.—II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14; Col. 3:1-17. In this connection it may be interesting to note that Paul taught this same truth. See the passages from his letters cited above.

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 33. *The life of Jesus as an expression of his teaching:* Luke 13:31-35; Matt. 11:25-30; John 13:3-17. In Jesus' life we see the best commentary on his spirit and his words. Note, for instance, his indifference to death, as seen in Luke 13:31-35; his joy in fellowship with God even in the midst of disappointments, Matt. 11:25-30; and his willingness to serve, John 13:3-17.

IV. THE APPLICATION OF THESE TEACHINGS TO MODERN LIFE

Twenty-sixth day.—If we are to be "children of God" must we not at the outset decide as to whether we are ready to make spiritual values supreme? That is a decision always difficult, but exceptionally so in an age abounding in temptations to estimate life in terms of economic efficiency. Yet, until a man decides to be like God as Jesus reveals him, he will be unable to appreciate thoroughly the teaching of Jesus regarding life and conduct. Nor will he be ready to exchange the tangible goods, like wealth and power, for the spiritual conquests and peace which Jesus taught were supreme. Must not this attitude of mind be presupposed by all reforms?

Twenty-seventh day.—Nations also must make the same decision. Brute force may be decorated by the trappings of militarism, but sooner or later every nation has to choose between the ideals of Jesus and war. Can a nation be so thoroughly Christianized as to refuse to distrust its neighbors, and express in its international relations the principles which Jesus teaches are the characteristics

of the kingdom of God? Can a Christian nation be made out of un-Christian people?

Twenty-eighth day.—How far are those seeking to be true children of God under obligation to make an entire nation repent? Are there not times when a nation as truly as an individual must needs confess itself in the wrong? Are there not illustrations of this need in recent history? Is such action likely except when individuals have abiding faith in God's presence in history? What is the duty of the church in this regard?

Twenty-ninth day.—How far are consistent Christians under obligations to carry the principle of sacrifice of privilege in the interest of others into their ordinary activities? Does Jesus make exceptions in the way of business, or politics, or family life? What about the treatment of competitors? Of those who misrepresent us? Of those who do us injustice? Can a child of God consistently be indifferent to any need or to that which works injury to others?

Thirtieth Day.—Is there not danger that, in our insistence upon the ethical obligations of those who seek to be children of God, we may overlook the joy and peace that are theirs? If spiritual realities are to be made supreme, even at great cost, is it not imperative that we develop throughout our civilization a new confidence in God? To preach the gospel and to institutionalize its principles is to bring *happiness* to individuals and nations. Is it wrong to expect that because God is fatherly happiness is to come from efforts to be brotherly?

Thirty-first day.—How far are we realizing the moral uplift that lies in Jesus' teaching as to the future life? Can we believe that the Heavenly Father is so indifferent to human sorrow born of men's injustice that he will never bring about justice? Have not Christians a nobler hope than those who distrust God?